

VZCZCXRO7178
RR RUEHMR
DE RUEHKI #0976/01 1731131
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 221131Z JUN 06
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4162
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KINSHASA 000976

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/22/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#) [ELECTIONS](#)
SUBJECT: SLOGGING TOWARD JULY 30 ELECTIONS

REF: KINSHASA 954

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Roger Meece. Reason 1.4 (b/d)

11. (C) Summary: President Kabila, the four GDRC Vice Presidents, other senior officials and members of the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met for four and a half hours June 21 to discuss election planning and the post-June 30 future. The Independent Election Committee (CEI) President presented an extensive report on preparations for the scheduled July 30 first round elections, as well as the yet unscheduled second round. There was extensive but inconclusive debate about what if anything should be done relative to the key June 30 originally scheduled Transition expiration, and the period leading to installation of a new government. All parties agreed that the July 30 first round date must be preserved, representing an important explicit endorsement of this date. VPs Ruberwa, Z'Ahidi, and Bemba variously pushed for some kind of expanded "consultation" to discuss broader political topics, an idea resisted by Kabila and essentially by several CIAT members. Eventually, Kabila and the VPs agreed to summary communicate language to refer to the need for "concertations" (planning), but not "consultations" (implying a more formal broad conference), with agreement to continue the session next week. End summary.

Assembling the Institutions

12. (SBU) The Presidency convened an extraordinary "inter-institutional meeting" June 21 to discuss elections. The meeting arose out of growing public debate about the desirability of holding some kind of broad political conference to discuss the justification and modalities of how to continue Transition government operations beyond June 30, the date originally projected as the end of the Transition under terms of the 2003 Sun City accords. The opposition UDPS party, which has chosen to boycott the election process, has been calling for a new political "dialogue" to renegotiate the nature and form of the GDRC government, and redefining the election process. Others less radical, including Vice President Ruberwa, have expressed support for some sort of broad "consultations" to achieve a political consensus regarding the post-June 30 future.

13. (C) Participants in the June 21 meeting included President Kabila, all four GDRC Vice Presidents, the Presidents of the National Assembly and Senate, the Minister of the Interior, the heads of the five Transition "citizen institutions" (in charge of elections, media oversight, human rights monitoring, anti-corruption activities, and "truth and reconciliation"), several Presidency support staff, and the heads of mission constituting the International Committee to

Accompany the Transition (CIAT). There had been considerable confusion about the CIAT invitation up to the morning of the event. At least one Presidency advisor apparently sought to invite only four CIAT representatives, the European Commission delegate, the EU Presidency Ambassador, and the equivalent African Union counterparts. CIAT members unanimously agreed this was unacceptable; GDRC officials could not determine CIAT representation. Eventually all CIAT members were invited.

Election Preparations

¶4. (C) The June 21 agenda included two items - the state of election preparations and the June 30 Transition "expiration" date. Independent Election Committee (CEI) President Malu Malu delivered a comprehensive summary of elections planning, supported by a thick briefing document provided to each meeting participant. Typical of Malu Malu's performances, his report was detailed and thorough, emphasizing progress made toward the July 30 first-round target date, but noting problems. For example, Malu Malu reported that legislative ballots for Kinshasa just received from South Africa contained errors requiring reprinting. He outlined steps being taken to correct the problem, preserving the July 30 date. There were few questions following Malu Malu's presentation, but Vice Presidents Ruberwa and Z'Ahidi Ngoma requested more time to study the CEI's extensive documentation in more detail, and potentially ask follow-on questions. EU Special Envoy Aldo Ajello's recent slip, publicly announcing a de facto second round election calendar (reftel), was not referenced or discussed, even though Ajello is ironically in the DRC right now. Malu Malu confirmed that

KINSHASA 00000976 002 OF 003

he hopes to announce the second round calendar next week.

Post June 30: New Consultation?

¶5. (C) Ruberwa introduced debate on the second topic, apparently put on the agenda at his request. Noting an increasingly tense political atmosphere and ambiguities of the power of the government to extend the original Transition period, he proposed convening a broader political consultation to achieve a political consensus regarding elections and government operations beyond June 30. He opined that such a meeting could be well defined and last no more than one day. Vice Presidents Bemba and Z'Ahidi endorsed the general approach, albeit for different reasons. At various times, Bemba spoke of numerous election difficulties, including media access, perceived harassment of candidate(s), candidate security, and other problems. Z'Ahidi focused on perceived election shortcomings, also speaking at length regarding security problems in eastern DRC and the problem they pose for the elections. Other speakers for the most part expressed reservations. Senate President Marini expressed doubts that such a meeting could be contained, noted potential resultant risks to the election calendar, and observed that the debate over the new Constitution (endorsed by popular referendum) had resolved the debate about Transition institutions continuing until a new elected government is formed. Others emphasized that the existing Transition institutions, as represented in the room, were explicitly charged with addressing the kinds of concerns and problems identified by various speakers. National Assembly President Luhaka (a member of Bemba's party) limited himself to stating that the Assembly had taken no position on the question. Interior Minister Mbemba spoke of the risks of assembling such a conference, noting the 1991 precedent of a national conference that declared itself "sovereign" and setting off to chart a totally new political future. (Comment: Some of the discussion became somewhat heated, although never descending to the level of ugly personal attacks that have at times characterized such meetings. End comment).

¶16. (C) The CIAT has not taken a formal position regarding a broad "consultation" forum, but members spoke of the importance and need to utilize existing institutions, as well as the overriding importance of preserving the July 30 first-round target date. CIAT members also noted the risks to government operations associated with the electoral period extending to the formation of a new government, reminding the "Espace Presidentiel" (President and four Vice Presidents) of a CIAT request just made for an urgent meeting of the CIAT with the "Espace" precisely to discuss the issue.

¶17. (C) There was no consensus regarding the "consultation" proposal. Kabila summarized the long discussion by noting that during the discussion all parties had explicitly endorsed the July 30 elected target date, and all had acknowledged that no debate or consultation should put that date at risk. As well, there had been general agreement that further exchanges or general consultations would be useful, albeit no full agreement on the form. Kabila also agreed to a follow-on meeting of the same group on Monday, June 26, to permit participants to ask further questions after studying the CEI documents, as well as discuss the topic further.

Public Comments

¶18. (C) Ruberwa asked what if anything should be said to the press following the meeting, provoking new active discussions. All agreed that the July 30 date could and should be emphasized, but there was disagreement about what to say about proposed new discussions. Someone proposed saying further "consultations were desirable. The Belgian Ambassador suggested that this should be in the context of existing institutions, to which VP Bemba answered sharply that this might be the CIAT's view, but not necessarily that of others. Kabila and the four Vice Presidents went into an extended huddle, eventually announcing that it would be acceptable to talk about further "concertations" (essentially, planning) vice "consultations." A drafting committee was appointed to draw up language.

¶19. (C) Among final "other business" comments, Bemba reiterated a familiar appeal that the international community should remain neutral in the election race, and not endorse certain candidates or parties. A Monday follow-on meeting

KINSHASA 00000976 003 OF 003

was scheduled, and Kabila asked Ruberwa, in his capacity as chair of the Political Commission, to come up with new ideas to address the "consultations/concertations" issues. Ruberwa responded that would be unlikely before Monday, and he essentially had already made his recommendation.

Comment

¶10. (C) Comment: The "consultation" or "dialogue" debate is highly charged, and it is difficult to see how such a conference could be brought off before June 30, even if acceptable terms of reference could be defined. It could in any event be a risky exercise and difficult to control, as noted by several speakers during the meeting. If Kabila thought the "inter-institutional meeting" could preempt the pressure for a larger exercise, he miscalculated. On a positive note, explicit endorsement without reserves for the July 30 target election date from all four Vice Presidents represents a useful step forward, and will help reinforce publicly the July 30 election as a non-negotiable political fact. If the Monday follow-on meeting comes off, no sure thing, we do not expect a new consensus to emerge regarding broader "consultations." Bemba's parting shot about international neutrality reflects his longstanding view that international partners have already lined up behind Kabila, but is not based on any new specific events or charges. The session was a not-untypical rather exhausting discussion, not

particularly conclusive, but perhaps helpful in advancing the ball a bit further down the field toward July 30. End comment.

MEECE